



Alaska Operator Certification Program Report for State Fiscal Year 2022

September 2022



Mike Dunleavy, Governor

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Executive Summary

The Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 directed the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, in cooperation with the States, to develop, implement, and enforce minimum standards for certification and recertification of operators of community and non-transient non-community public water systems. This annual program report for the Alaska Operator Certification Program is submitted pursuant to federal guidelines published in the Federal Register dated February 5, 1999, and in accordance with the guidelines provided by the EPA Drinking Water Protection Division. Alaska's annual operator certification report provides an update on the implementation of the Operator Certification Program for the period from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

Alaska currently regulates 648 community, non-transient non-community, and transient non-community¹ public water systems. In State Fiscal Year 2022 (SFY22), 81% of all water systems were compliant with the operator certification requirements by having operators certified at levels commensurate with the systems' classifications. During SFY22, the Alaska Operator Certification Program continued efforts to classify water systems, certify operators, and track and improve compliance rates.

The public health objectives of the Operator Certification Program are to ensure that the customers of Alaskan public water systems are provided with an adequate supply of safe, potable drinking water, are confident that their water is safe to drink, and that the operators are trained and certified as well as have the knowledge and understanding of public health reasons for drinking water standards.

Antibacksliding

The implementation of the federal requirements and level of service provided by the Alaska Operator Certification Program remains the same, and no backsliding has occurred since submitting the annual report covering SFY21.

¹ Per 18 AAC 74.006 and 18 AAC 74.400, transient non-community water systems using surface water or groundwater under the influence of surface water as a source are required to have properly certified water operators .

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Authorization (Baseline Standard 1)

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Amendments of 1996, the State primacy agency is required to implement an Operator Certification Program and to provide annual reports in order to receive the full federal allocation under the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may withhold 20% of the State's funding if the Operator Certification Program requirements are not met.

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) is the designated State primacy agency for the Safe Drinking Water Act. The Operator Certification Program (OpCert) is housed within the ADEC's Division of Water and is responsible for classifying water systems and certifying operators. Additionally, the Governor's Water and Wastewater Works Advisory Board (Board), comprised of eight water/wastewater professionals appointed to five-year terms by the Governor, provides counsel regarding critical programmatic efforts and decisions.

In response to federal guidelines, the Alaska Operator Certification Program regulations were revised in 2001 to include oversight of all community, non-transient non-community systems, and transient non-community systems that use surface water or groundwater under the influence of surface water as a source. Prior to 2001, OpCert only regulated systems serving populations of greater than 500 people or having greater than 100 service connections. Since 2001, OpCert's implementation of the program has consistently been approved by EPA as compliant with the 1996 Amendments to the SDWA.

Classification of Systems, Facilities, and Operators (Baseline Standard 2)

Water systems in Alaska are classified according to a point rating system that includes the production capacity, source water type, and complexity of the treatment processes. Water systems are divided into the following three categories:

- Small Water Systems:
 - Small Untreated Water Systems: Community water systems (CWS) and non-transient non-community water systems (NTNCWS) that serve fewer than 500 people, fewer than 100 service connections, and add no chemicals to the water. Small untreated systems may perform passive treatment such as softening or cartridge filtration.
 - Small Treated Water Systems: CWS, NTNCWS, and transient non-community water systems (TNCWS) that serve fewer than 500 people, fewer than 100 service connections, and add one chemical to the water. Small treated systems may perform passive treatment such as softening or cartridge filtration.
- Water Treatment Systems:
 - CWS, NTNCWS, and TNCWS that are required to have a certified operator per 18 AAC 74.006 and classified as classes 1 – 4 by using the point rating system in 18 AAC 74.120.

- Water Distribution Systems:
 - CWS and NTNCWS where no water treatment is taking place, are required to have a certified operator per 18 AAC 74.006 and classified as classes 1 – 4 per 18 AAC 74.120.

While the classifications of existing systems have been documented, constant attention must be paid to keep the data current as systems evolve, as well as to classify new systems.

The 648 Alaskan CWS, NTNCWS, and TNCWS requiring certified operators are classified as follows:

System Type	Class	Number of Systems
Small	Untreated	283
Small	Treated	118
Water Treatment	1	104
Water Treatment	2	110
Water Treatment	3	7
Water Treatment	4	3
Water Distribution	1	18
Water Distribution	2	3
Water Distribution	3	2

Table 1: System Types

Classification efforts continued using a variety of methods during the SFY22 reporting period.

- OpCert distributed detailed classification data to all system owners. Owners were asked to review data for accuracy and respond when necessary.
- As in the past, OpCert continued to work closely with the Drinking Water Program (DWP) during the plan review process. DWP considers operator certification requirements and consults with OpCert when issuing approvals to construct and operate.
- OpCert staff reviewed sanitary survey reports, provided by DWP, which contain updated information regarding the current configuration of water systems.
- OpCert worked closely with engineers from the Village Safe Water Program (VSW) and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), as well as consulting engineers, who are required to consult with OpCert regarding classification issues as systems are being designed or modified.

Operators in Responsible Charge of Water Systems

All public water systems are required to have a designated operator in responsible charge (ORC) who holds certification at a level equal to or greater than the classification of the system. For water treatment and water distribution systems, the ORC must be on-site at the system or, if off-site, the ORC must be available by radio or telephone and able to be on-site at the system within an hour. For small untreated and small treated water systems, the ORC must be on-site at the system or, if off-site, the ORC must be available by radio or telephone and able to be on-site at the system within three hours. The ORC makes all operational decisions.

The following chart summarizes water system compliance at the end of SFY22.

System Class	Number of Systems	Without Certified ORC	With Certified ORC	Percent With Certified ORC	With Certified ORC at the Correct Level	Percent With Certified ORC at the Correct Level
SU	283	38	245	87%	245	87%
ST	118	14	104	88%	104	88%
WT 1	104	15	89	86%	74	71%
WT 2	110	10	100	91%	69	63%
WT 3	7	0	7	100%	7	100%
WT 4	3	0	3	100%	3	100%
WD 1	18	0	18	100%	18	100%
WD 2	3	1	2	67%	2	67%
WD 3	2	2	2	100%	2	100%
Total	648	80	570	88%	524	81%

Table 2: Compliance by System Type

SU = Small Untreated

WT = Water Treatment

ST = Small Treated

WD = Water Distribution

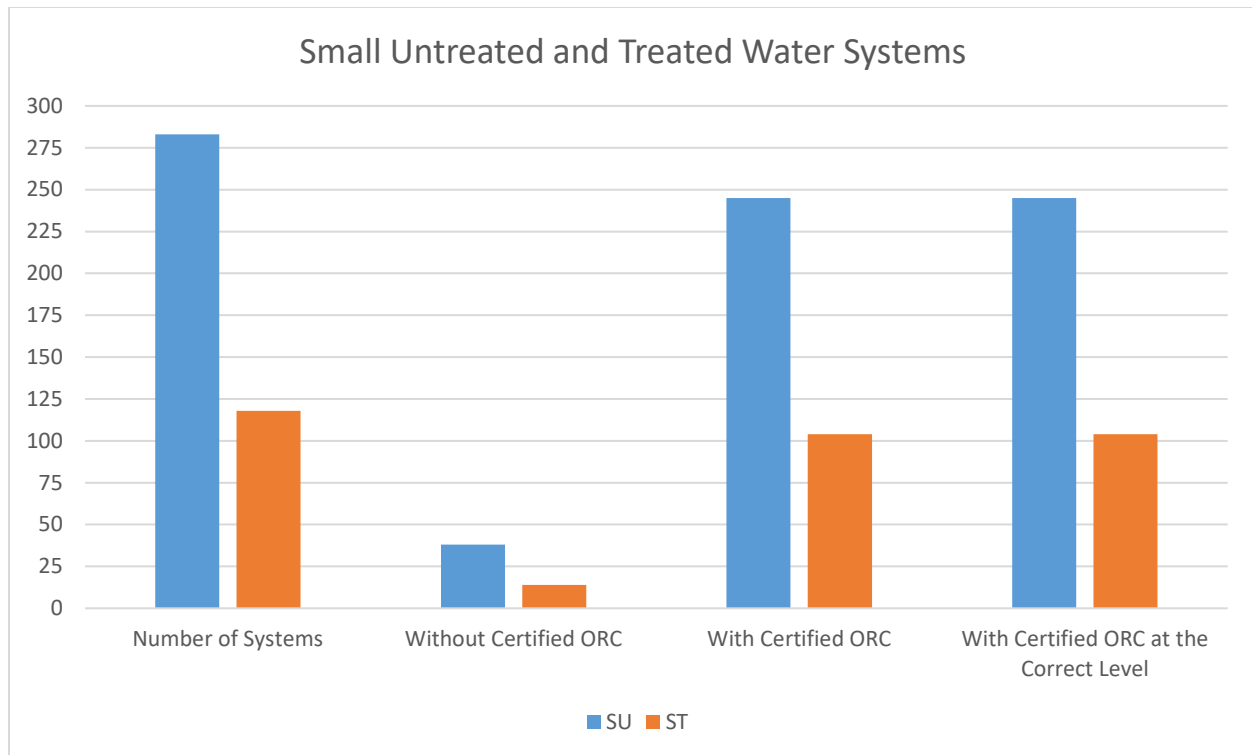


Figure 1: Small Water System Compliance

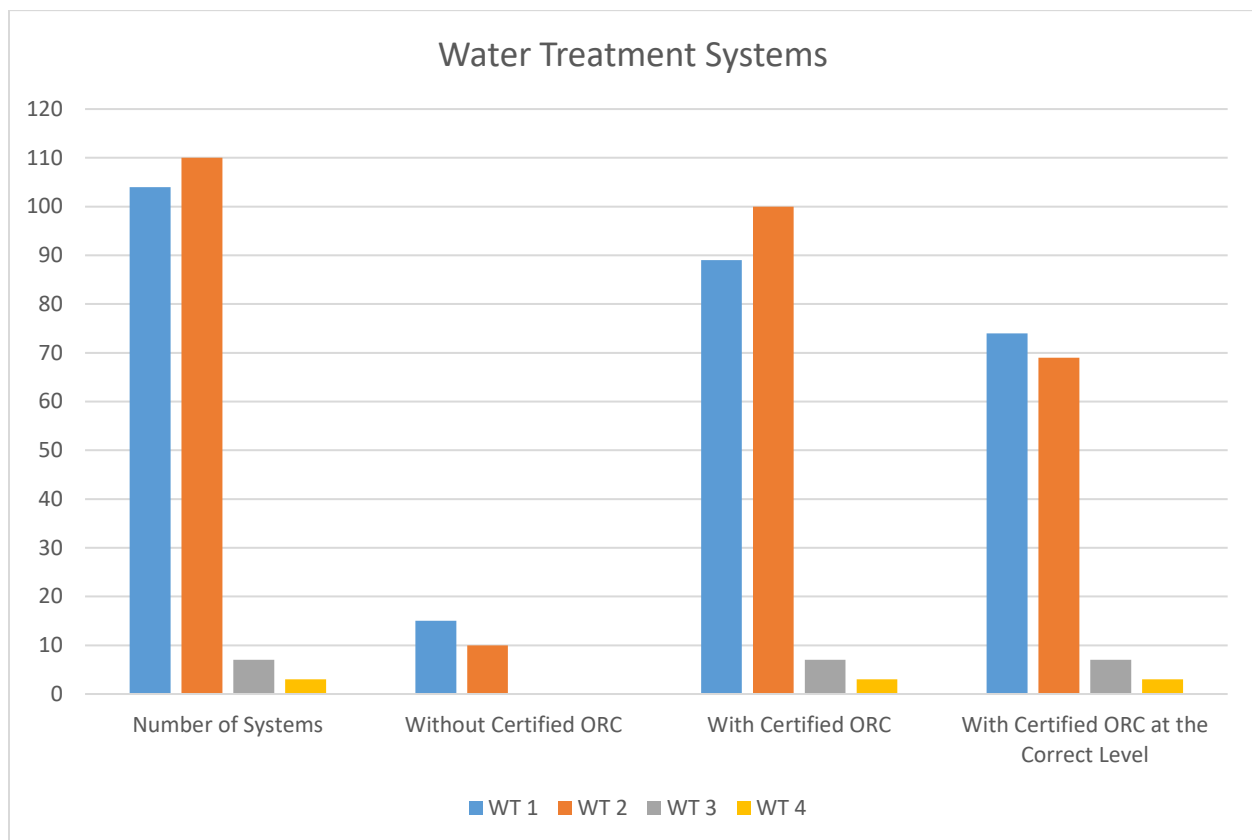


Figure 2: Water Treatment System Compliance

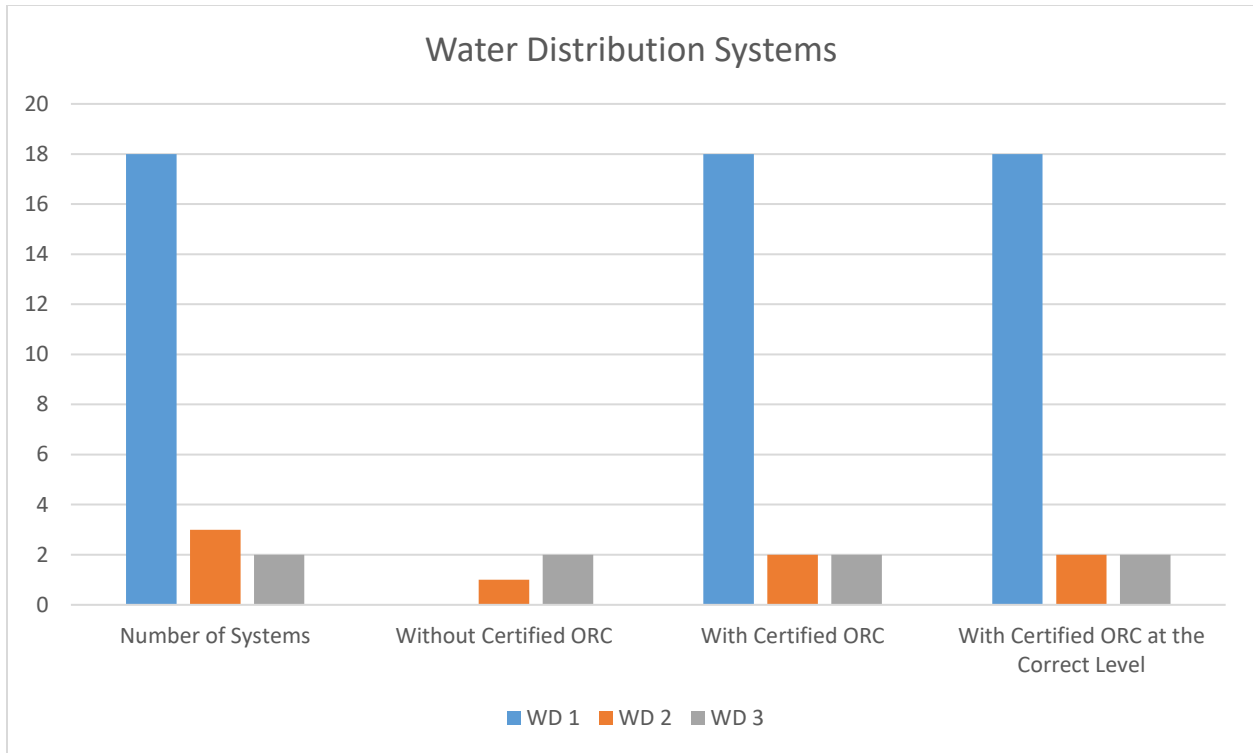


Figure 3: Water Distribution System Compliance

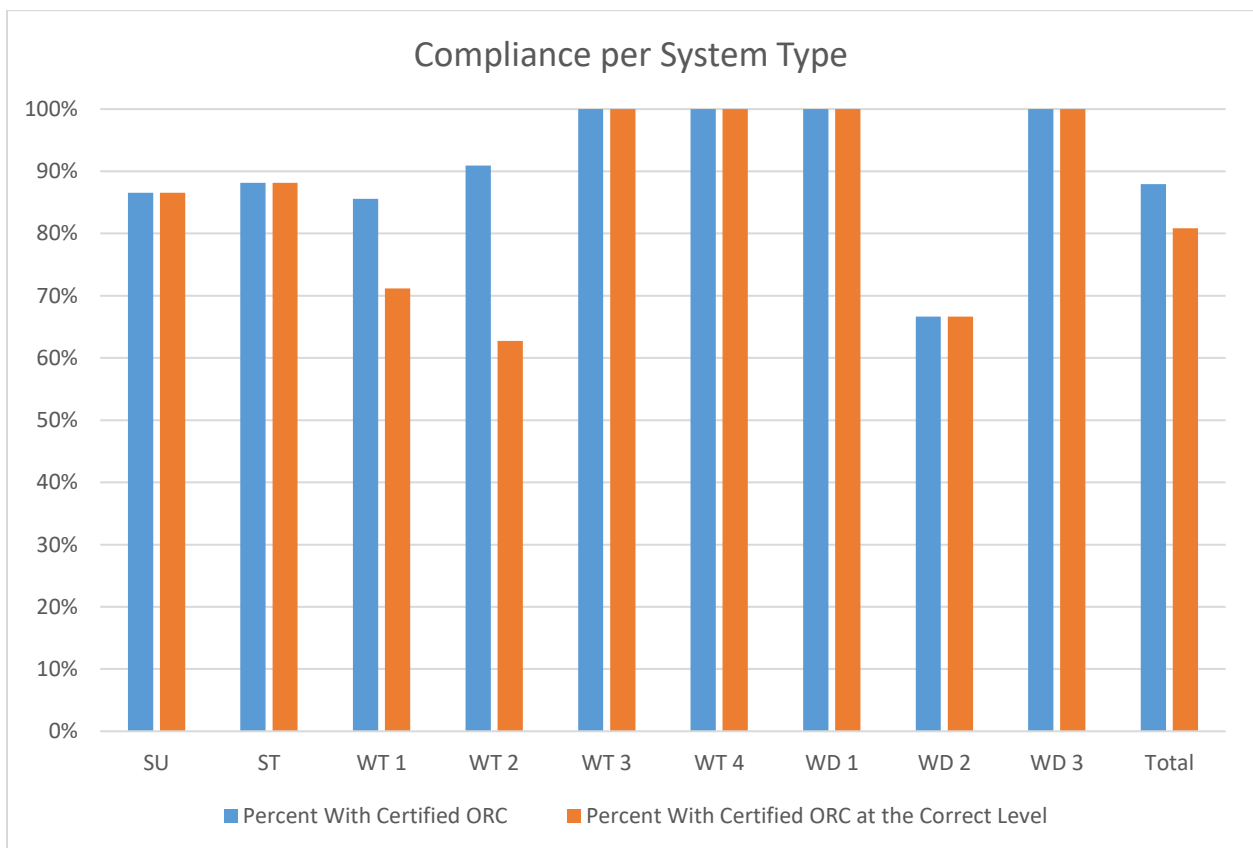


Figure 4: Compliance per System Type

Maintaining Operator and System Information

ORC compliance data is updated in the OpCert database using the following methods:

- Upon certification, operators are associated with systems based on information provided in their applications.
- Operator data is updated when OpCert staff review Sanitary Survey reports provided by DWP.
- Operator data is included as part of the routine notification to system owners regarding system classifications, and system owners notify OpCert of required changes.
- Operator data is confirmed using the quarterly reports of the Remote Maintenance Worker (RMW) Program. The RMW Program is comprised of 15 circuit riders who provide technical assistance to approximately 200 rural communities across the state. RMWs report current operator information for each system they support on a quarterly basis, and OpCert uses this information to update operator data.

Operator Qualifications (Baseline Standard 3)

Exam Administration

To become certified, operators must pass exams and meet experience and education requirements. There are five levels of certification, each in water treatment and water distribution and two levels in small water system operations. Exams are available for each level and offered in a variety of settings.

Exams are purchased from Water Professionals International (WPI), formerly known as the Association of Boards of Certification (ABC); however, exams are still referred to as ABC exams. ABC exams are used by more than 100 certification programs representing over 40 states, 10 Canadian provinces and territories, as well as numerous international and tribal programs. WPI provides both paper and web-based versions of the standardized water treatment and water distribution exams for levels 1 through 4. The ABC standardized exams were developed through a rigorous psychometric process that included the use of in-depth job analyses surveys, development of “Need-to-Know” criteria from data acquired from the surveys, creation of exam items by subject matter experts, and beta testing of exams by operators in the United States and Canada. Alaska currently uses the ABC 2017 and 2019 standardized certification exams.

Exams are administered on-demand in rural communities in addition to the biannual statewide paper-based exams and online exams. Applications for certification are not reviewed until after

operators pass exams, and it is the responsibility of the operators to submit applications. In some cases, operators take exams at levels higher than previously passed exams knowing that they have not yet met the experience and education eligibility requirements for the higher levels of certification. In those cases, applications are not typically submitted immediately. For these reasons, the number of exams passed often does not reflect the number of certifications issued.

The number of exams administered has increased since last year due to the lifting of restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, ANTHC has been conducting virtual small treated water system courses and water treatment courses which have increased the number of paper-based exams being administered.

- Due to the availability of online exams, the number of paper-based exams being administered during the biannual statewide exam cycles has decreased significantly over the years. OpCert administered no exams during the Fall 2021 exam cycle and four operators took four water-related exams in Utqiagvik during the Spring 2022 exam cycle. Three exams were passed with two resulting in certification. One exam cycle represents a month-long effort by OpCert staff in reviewing exam registration forms, scheduling proctor sites, mailing exams, notifying operators, and processing exam results.
- OpCert has been administering on-demand paper exams in rural communities since 2016. In SFY22, on-demand paper-based exams were administered in 16 rural communities to 22 operators who took 25 exams with 11 exams passed, resulting in seven certifications. Applications for certification have not yet been submitted for the remaining four.
- Water treatment and water distribution provisional level exams were administered at five classroom and three virtual introductory level courses taught by tribal health corporations and private trainers. Classroom courses consisted of four days of instruction followed by administration of the water treatment and/or water distribution provisional level exams. Virtual courses were conducted by the Alaska Rural Water Association (ARWA) and ANTHC. ARWA's virtual course consisted of the traditional four days of instruction followed by administration of the water treatment provisional level exam. ANTHC's virtual course was spread over five weeks with three hours of instruction on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays with the instructor being available for additional tutoring as necessary. Exams were also administered in the attendees' communities upon conclusion of the virtual course. Fifty-four operators attended classroom courses and 48 operators attended virtual courses. The 48 operators who attended virtual courses took their exams in one of 31 communities. In total, 102 operators took 104 exams at courses in SFY22. Operators passed 56 exams, with 18 resulting in certification. Applications for certification have not yet been submitted by the remaining 38.

- Small treated exams were administered at three small treated water systems virtual courses and one classroom course taught by tribal health corporations. The virtual courses consisted of one to two-hour daily training sessions spread over two weeks, followed by the small treated exam. The classroom course consisted of 17 hours of instruction over 2 ½ days. Thirty-eight operators attended virtual courses and took 38 exams administered in 28 locations. Six operators attended the classroom course and took six exams. Two operators who attended a course in SFY21 took their exams in SFY22. Operators passed 35 exams, with 35 resulting in certification.
- Water distribution level 1 and 2 exams were administered at four combination level 1 and 2 courses taught by a private trainer. The courses consisted of four days of instruction followed by administration of the water distribution level 1 or 2 exam. Sixty-seven operators attended the courses and took 67 exams. Operators passed 35 exams resulting in 13 certifications. Applications for certification have not yet been submitted for the remaining 22.
- Water treatment level 2 exams were administered at two intermediate water treatment courses taught by a private trainer and ARWA. The course consisted of four days of instruction followed by administration of the water treatment level 2 exam. Fifteen operators attended the courses and took 15 exams. Operators passed seven exams resulting in two certifications. Applications for certification have not yet been submitted for the five remaining.
- Online certification exams for small untreated and small treated water system operators were available at 11 testing locations: Anchorage, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Glennallen, Homer, Kenai, Ketchikan, Klawock, Kodiak, and Palmer. Twenty-eight operators took online small water system exams with 28 passing, with all resulting in certification.
- Online water treatment and water distribution exams were available at 14 testing locations throughout Alaska: Anchorage, Bethel, Cordova, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Klawock, Kodiak, Palmer, Sitka, Utqiagvik, and Valdez. The expedited registration process allows operators to be authorized for online exams in less than a month. Registration deadlines are the 1st of each month, and operators are authorized for exams by the 22nd of the same month. Operators are allowed 100 days from authorization to take exams. The OpCert database provides operators the convenience of online exam registration using credit cards to pay fees. One hundred four operators took 130 water treatment/distribution exams online. Operators passed 72 exams resulting in 34 certifications. Applications for certification have not yet been submitted for the 38 remaining who passed exams.

The following chart summarizes exam pass rates by delivery type.

Type	Exams	Exams Passed	Exam Pass Rate	Certifications
Exam Cycle	4	3	75%	2
On-Demand	25	11	44%	7
Provisional Courses	104	56	54%	18
Small Treated Courses	46	35	97%	35
Level 1 & 2 Courses	67	35	52%	13
Intermediate Courses	15	7	47%	2
Online SU & ST	28	28	100%	28
Online WT & WD	130	72	55%	34
All Exams	419	247	59%	139

Table 3: Exam Pass Rate by Delivery Type

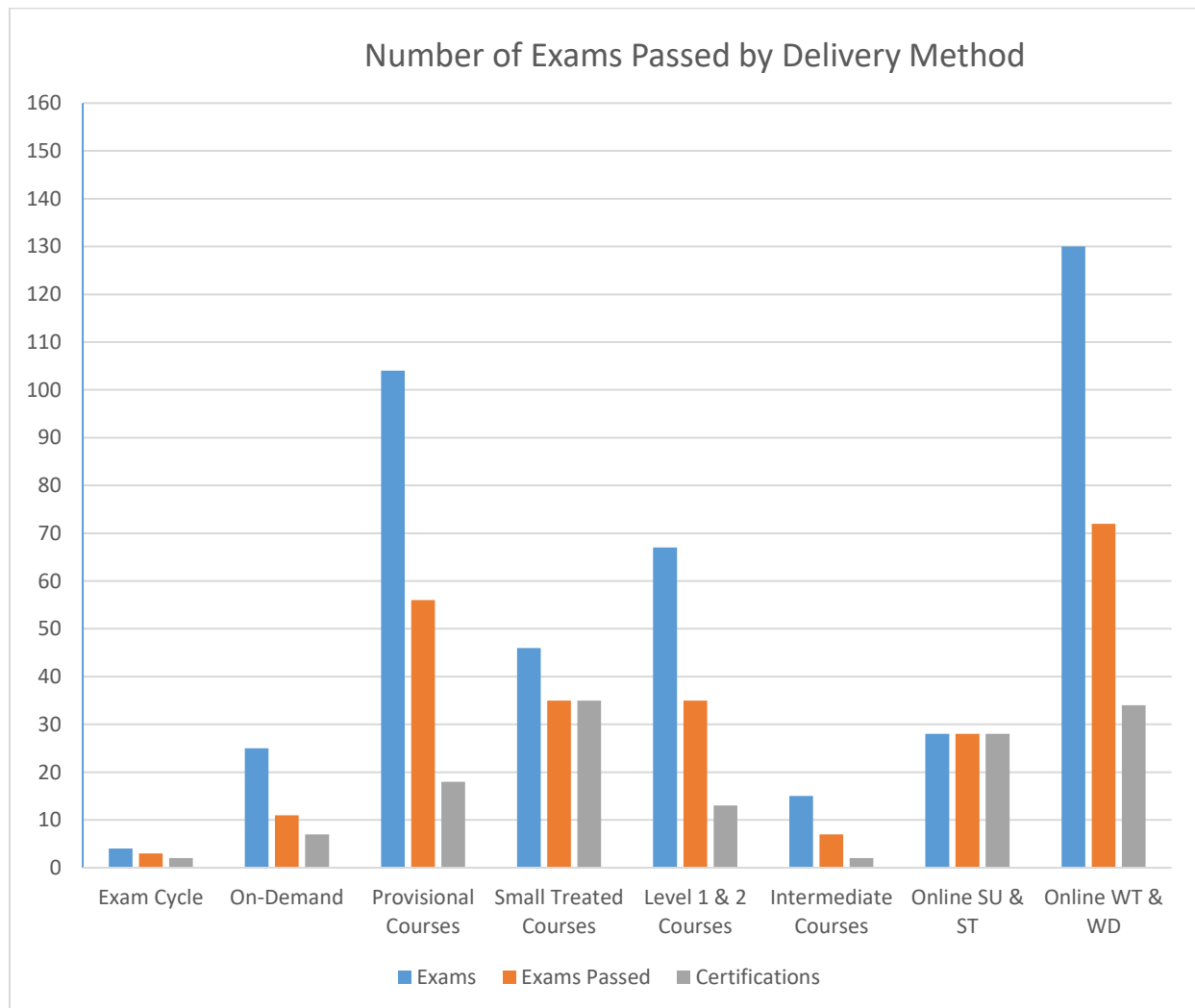


Figure 5: Number of Exams Passed by Delivery Method

In part due to the benefits of flexible scheduling and instant scoring available with online exams, the number of paper-based exams administered during exam cycles has declined each year since online exams became available in 2011. The following chart summarizes the shift from paper-based exams to online exams.

Year	Total Paper-Based*	On-Demand Paper	Online	Total
2011	210		57	267
2012	177		10	282
2013	182		183	385
2014	119		168	287
2015	120		173	293
2016	100		195	295
2017	85	30	243	328
2018	65	43	211	276
2019	82	65	167	249
2020	41	35	172	213
2021	41	40	175	216
2022	29	25	158	187

*Total Paper-Based is the exam cycle and on-demand paper exams and does not include paper exams administered at courses.

Table 4: Paper-Based vs. Online Exams

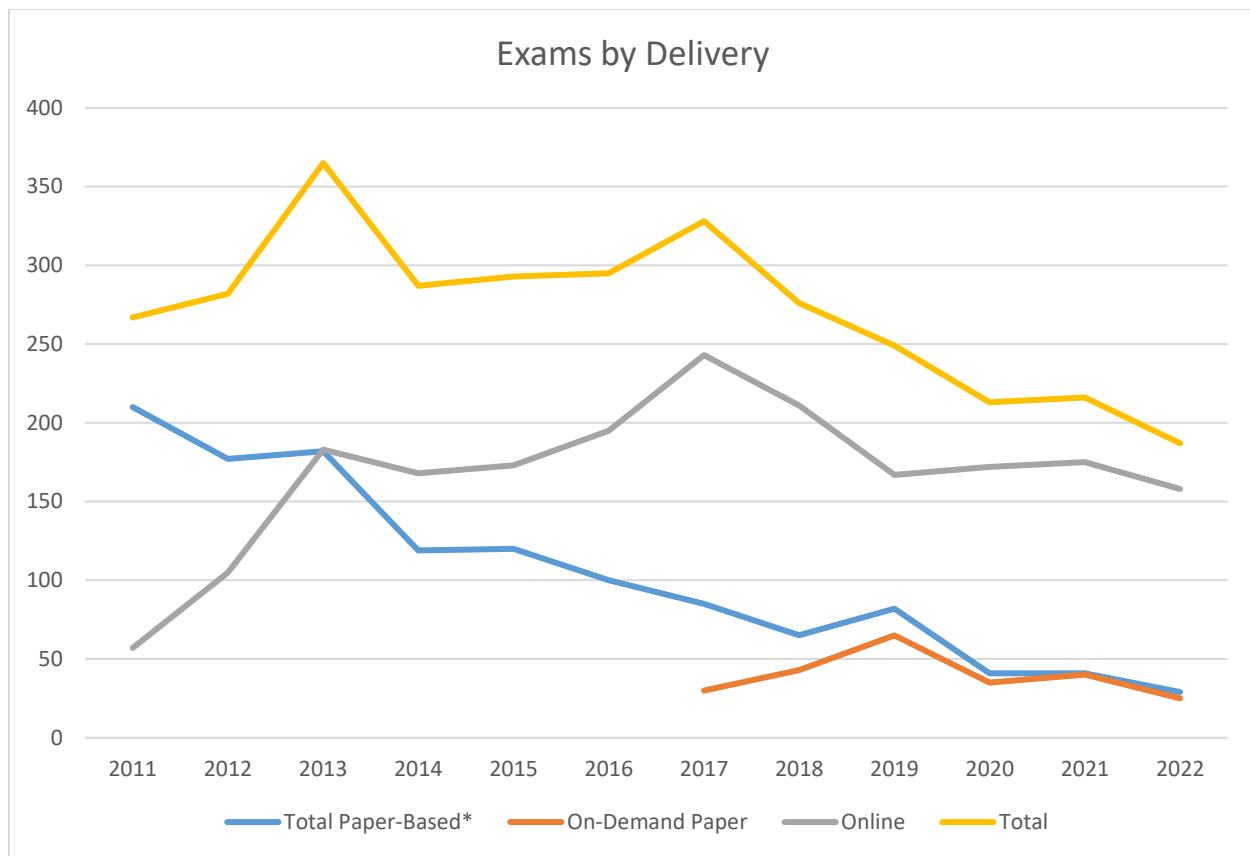


Figure 6: Comparison of Exam Delivery Method

For SFY22, the number of on-demand paper-based exams administered remained lower than in previous years due to health limitations because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Certification of Operators

After passing a certification exam, operators are required to demonstrate they have met education and experience requirements to obtain certification. The minimum education requirement for certification is possession of a high school diploma, GED, or relevant experience, substituting for the lack of education. Level 3 and 4 certifications require additional postsecondary education. Minimum experience requirements for certification are outlined in 18 AAC 74.050.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is evaluated on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the experience and education requirements of the certificate the operator holds from the other state, the exam passed, and education and operations experience. By Statute, reciprocity cannot be granted for certificates from states that do not grant reciprocity for Alaska certifications. Thirteen water-related certificates were issued via reciprocity in SFY22.

Enforcement (Baseline Standard 4)

OpCert continued to emphasize increasing exam availability and educating operators and systems about the certification requirements. As a result, OpCert staff spent significant time responding to requests for information regarding the certification requirements for large and small systems.

Historically, OpCert has focused on compliance assistance. In 2013, a Compliance and Enforcement Strategy was developed that outlines the enforcement process and describes a ranking system used to determine where OpCert will focus its efforts.

Additionally, the Drinking Water regulations (18 AAC 80) require that systems comply with the Operator Certification regulations (18 AAC 74). Therefore, DWP includes operator certification requirements as part of their enforcement actions, and both programs continue to work closely with non-compliant systems.

Efforts to Increase Compliance Rates

During the SFY22 reporting period, OpCert continued a quarterly schedule of analyzing the compliance status of systems. Compliance data was gathered, and systems were ranked using the method described in the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy. The ranking method considers factors such as system type, population served, source water, and system classification.

Water Treatment and Water Distribution Systems

All Water Treatment and Water Distribution systems, regardless of compliance status, were mailed letters, including a summary of the certification requirements, detailed system classification data, and operator information. OpCert received several responses from system owners with updated information and provided assistance regarding options for achieving compliance.

To enhance the tracking of compliance and enforcement, the water treatment and water distribution systems are divided up into geographical regions and assigned to one of the OpCert staff. This regionalized approach is also used by other ADEC programs, as well as technical assistance providers that support water systems, and allows “regional teams” to work together to address compliance issues. Additionally, enhancements were added to the OpCert database to assist in the tracking of compliance and enforcement. These enhancements will be discussed later in the Special Projects section of this report.

Weekly staff meetings were conducted to keep abreast of the status of non-compliant systems.

Small Untreated and Small Treated Water Systems

All Small Untreated and Small Treated water systems, regardless of compliance status, were sent compliance notification letters. OpCert continued to track the compliance status of these systems and worked with operators to obtain certification.

As with the larger systems, the small water systems are divided up into geographic regions and assigned to one of the OpCert staff for more individualized attention. Additionally, OpCert conducted weekly staff meetings to keep abreast of the status of non-compliant systems.

Agency Coordination Meeting

OpCert participated in agency coordination meetings in six rural regions of the state. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all the meetings were conducted virtually. The meetings provided an opportunity to coordinate with agencies that work with rural Alaskan communities on issues related to sanitation. Other agencies participating in the meetings included regional tribal health corporation RMWs and sanitarians, the Rural Utility Business Advisor Program (RUBA), DWP, the ADEC Wastewater and Solid Waste Programs, and VSW and ANTHC engineers. During the meetings, OpCert described the compliance status of each rural community, received input from other agencies regarding community-specific issues, updated system classification and operator information, and discussed options available to communities for achieving compliance.

Compliance Rates

As reported in 2021, 80 percent of systems were in compliance by having a properly certified operator on staff. Currently, 81 percent of systems are in compliance.

OpCert conducted a review of systems that changed compliance status from SFY21 to the present. Those findings are shown in Appendix A. The review shows that the overall compliance rate was affected by several factors:

- Systems achieving compliance (27 systems)
- New systems becoming active and achieving compliance (4 systems)
- Inactive systems becoming active and achieving compliance (1 system)
- Nonpublic water system increasing in population to become NTNCWS and achieving compliance (1 system)
- Systems upgraded in classification and still working toward compliance (1 system)
- Operator turnover where properly certified operators left a system (15 systems)
- Operators failing to renew certifications (5 systems)

System Specific Training and Certification (S²TC)

Previous reports discussed efforts to develop 13 training modules and certification exams that will be used to train and certify operators of systems that are chronically out of compliance with the operator certification requirements. As reported in the SFY21 annual report, OpCert, in collaboration with the RMW Program, finalized five modules in preparation for S²TC Program beta testing; however, the modules are still under final review. Two communities, both of which have long-standing operators who have not passed certification exams despite repeated attempts, have been identified for beta testing during SFY23.

Operator Disciplinary Action

Per 18 AAC 74.830, OpCert, with the Board's recommendation, has the authority to impose disciplinary action for acts of misconduct by an operator. In SFY22, OpCert investigated two allegations of operator misconduct involving improperly documented experience on an application for certification. One resulted in a compliance agreement with the operator which resulted in the downgrade of a Water Treatment Level 1 certification to Water Treatment Provisional Level and the other resulted in no disciplinary action being taken.

Certificate Renewal (Baseline Standard 5)

Operators are required to obtain continuing education every three years in order to renew certifications. Operators holding water treatment or water distribution certification are required to obtain three Continuing Education Units (CEUs), while operators holding Small Treated or Small Untreated certification are required to obtain one and 0.5 CEU, respectively. An operator who has obtained the required CEUs has up to one year to pay the renewal fee. However, the price of renewal increases over time during that one year, and the certificate is not valid until the fee has been paid.

Certificate	Renewed	Lapsed Certificate with CEU Requirement Met but No Payment	Lapsed Certificate with CEU Requirement Not Met
SU	26	0	10
ST	47	29	28
WT P	39	11	11
WT 1	64	5	19
WT 2	51	0	12
WT 3	30	0	5
WT 4	24	0	3
WD P	47	16	20
WD 1	63	3	17
WD 2	37	7	2
WD 3	25	0	5
WD 4	35	0	5
Total	488	71	137

Table 5: Renewal Status for Certificates that Expired on December 31, 2021

Continuing Education

Alaskan operators earned continuing education through the following means:

- Classroom courses taught by a variety of organizations
- Correspondence courses
- Utility-sponsored training
- Industry conferences
- Online training

During the SFY22 reporting period, OpCert recorded over 1,500 individual continuing education courses attended to operators' files. OpCert continued its support of training by approving 196 online and classroom courses. The Alaska Rural Water Association sponsored a statewide virtual conference in October. The Alaska Water Wastewater Management Association sponsored in-person regional and statewide conferences in October and May respectively.

California State University Small Water System Videos

During the SFY22 reporting period, OpCert administered 103 of the California State University (CSU) *Small Water System* and *Water Systems Operation and Maintenance* correspondence type video series courses. The video courses are especially relevant to the operation and maintenance of small water systems and provide small system operators with the continuing education required to keep their certifications current.

ADEC Introduction to Small Water Systems Correspondence Course

The Introduction to Small Water Systems manual is administered as a correspondence course by OpCert. This course qualifies operators for provisional level water treatment and distribution certification after passing the respective certification exams. Twenty operators completed this course during the SFY22 reporting period.

ADEC Small Untreated and Small Treated Water Systems Correspondence Courses

OpCert offers two correspondence courses targeting operators of small water systems. The Small Untreated Water System course qualifies operators for Small Untreated Water System certification after passing the certification exam. Five operators completed this course during the SFY22 reporting period. The Small Treated Water System course qualifies operators for Small Treated Water System certification after passing the certification exam. Twenty-five operators completed this course during the SFY22 reporting period.

Presentations at Conferences

Typically, OpCert attends and conducts presentations at several industry conferences per year. OpCert presented virtually at the ARWA Annual Statewide Conference and in-person at the AWWMA Statewide Conference in Anchorage on topics covering operator certification including the importance of certification, exam preparation, the exam/certification process, and online operator profiles.

Resources Needed to Implement the Program (Baseline Standard 6)

OpCert is funded from two sources: Program Receipts generated from fees charged for exams, application reviews, certificate renewals, and reciprocity reviews; and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Local Assistance and Other State Programs Set-Aside.

OpCert staff consists of one program manager, three full-time professional-level staff, and one part-time college intern. OpCert staff provides all services related to operator certification including administration of exams, review of certification applications, classification of water systems, review of training courses for continuing education, and compliance and enforcement of water systems. OpCert has a customized database to track all data related to operator certification. This database is maintained via a five-year contract with Wostmann Associates.

Under the current organization, and with the present level of funding, Alaska has sufficient resources to implement the OpCert Program for the foreseeable future. For several years, the DWSRF Small System Technical Assistance Set-Aside has not been used; those banked funds will be made available to OpCert should the need arise in future fiscal years.

Recertification (Baseline Standard 7)

Certificates are valid for a three-year period beginning on January 1 of the year of issuance. Once a certificate has expired, the operator is no longer certified. To regain certification, an operator must take and pass the exam and then apply for certification. Operators are allowed to take the exam at the level of the expired certificate for three years after expiration. After three years, operators must retake exams sequentially starting at level 1.

Stakeholder Involvement (Baseline Standard 8)

Stakeholder involvement is important to meeting the public health objectives of Alaska's Operator Certification Program. It helps ensure the relevancy and validity of the program and instills confidence in all interested parties. In recognition of this, Alaska employs various strategies to include ongoing stakeholder involvement, including an advisory board.

The Governor's Water and Wastewater Works Advisory Board

The Governor's Water and Wastewater Works Advisory Board (Board) is a group of eight water/wastewater professionals established to advise ADEC on matters of operator certification and training. The current Board is comprised of certified operators, public works personnel, trainers, and engineers. New members of the Board are appointed by the Governor. The Board generally meets every 9 to 18 months, as needed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board met virtually on May 31- June 1, 2022.

During the May 31 – June 1, 2022 meeting, the following items specific to the program review were discussed:

- The Board reviewed Alternate Method of System Supervision² (AMOSS) plans submitted by the City of Talkeetna and the City of Seldovia. The City of Talkeetna's AMOSS plan was approved until August 3, 2022, at which time the operator will attain the proper level of certification. The City of Seldovia's AMOSS plan was approved for one year (until June 2, 2023).
- The Board reviewed the statuses of the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) and Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) AMOSS plans. The Board recommended that the LKSD AMOSS plan and the KPB AMOSS plan, which had been approved during a previous meeting, be approved for an additional year.

² AMOSS Plans are required for systems that are temporarily unable to staff with an operator certified to the level of the system. System owners must submit plans that describe current system supervision, how the utility proposes to operate without a suitably certified operator, and the process they will follow to come into compliance with the regulations. Plans are considered by the Board who then makes a recommendation to OpCert regarding approval or denial.

- The Board reviewed the information provided by the five contract operator companies that provide operational services to small water systems located in the Anchorage and Fairbanks areas. The five companies collectively operate and maintain 132 water systems. The Board reviewed information such as the number of systems operated by each company, frequency of visits to the systems, Drinking Water compliance, and the number of certified operators working for each company.
- The Board reviewed one AMOSS plan submitted by a new contract operator company and approved it for one year.
- The Board reviewed allegations of an operator falsifying experience in obtaining Water Treatment Level 1 certification and his supervisor for verifying the alleged false experience. After a review of the evidence produced by OpCert staff, the Board recommended that the operator enters into a consent agreement, voluntarily relinquish his Water Treatment Level 1 certificate, and be issued a Water Treatment Provisional Level certificate as a replacement. The Board recommended that no disciplinary action be taken against the operator's supervisor.
- The Board reviewed a request by an operator to reconsider a reciprocity denial made by OpCert. After review of information provided by the operator and OpCert, the Board upheld OpCert's denial of reciprocity.
- OpCert provided the Board with an update of program activities, including certification exam results, small untreated and treated water systems course development, the Water System Excellence award, development of new operator certificates, and welcome packets to inform new rural utility staff and operators of resources available to them.

Program Review (Baseline Standard 9)

The Facilities Program Manager and the Technical Assistance (TA) Program Manager assist in conducting periodic peer review meetings of the Operator Certification Program's processes, procedures, and data management. The Operator Certification Program's three Environmental Program Specialists (EPS) are each assigned to work with water systems in a geographic region of Alaska, consistent with the regional assignments of RMWs and Local Government Specialists with the RUBA Program. This allows each EPS to develop a relationship with the system owners and operators in their regions, as well as the technical assistance providers that support them, thus enhancing communication. This approach has also improved program efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, weekly system compliance meetings are conducted to keep the TA Program Manager and the Operator Certification Program Manager abreast of the compliance status of the systems in each EPS's region.

Special Projects during the SFY22 Reporting Period

In addition to the routine work of the Operator Certification Program, OpCert staff spent significant time and effort on special projects during SFY22.

- Small Untreated and Small Treated Water Systems Course Development
- Water System Excellence Award
- Welcome Packets for New Rural Utility Manager and Operators
- Rural Sanitation Calendar

Small Untreated and Small Treated Water Systems Course Development

Small untreated (SU) and small treated (ST) water systems are community or non-transient non-community water systems that serve fewer than 500 people, contain fewer than 100 service connections, and either add no chemicals or one chemical for treatment, respectively. To be eligible for certification, an operator must pass the certification exam and either meet the experience requirement for certification or complete a department-approved course. The department-approved courses are currently administered as correspondence courses using manuals developed in 2002. From 2004 to 2019, online versions of the course were available and were most recently hosted by the water/wastewater program at the University of Alaska, Southeast (UAS) in Sitka; however, the UAS program was eliminated in 2019 and along with it the SU and ST online courses.

In the spring of 2020, OpCert solicited proposals for the development of a small untreated and small treated online training course, study modules, and consolidation of the small untreated manual and the small treated manual into one single manual. The intent is to “refresh” the manual and make online courses available again. The contract ended in SFY22 and OpCert is in the final stages of reviewing and deploying the online training and manual.

Water System Excellence Award

The Water System Excellence Award (WSEA) is a joint venture between OpCert and DWP. The WSEA recognizes water systems that achieve outstanding performance in the operation of their systems. The WSEA has two tiers, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. To earn the Ursa Major award, a water system must maintain four quarters of operator certification compliance with no open, unresolved, or incurred drinking water violations during the award year. To earn the Ursa Minor award, a water system must maintain four quarters of operator certification compliance with no more than one open, unresolved, or incurred drinking water violation during the award year, or maintain three quarters of operator certification compliance with no open, unresolved, or incurred drinking water violations during the award year. For the 2021 award year, 277 water systems will be awarded Ursa Major and 92 will be awarded Ursa Minor.

Welcome Packets for New Rural Utility Manager and Operators

Water systems in rural communities suffer from frequent turnover in utility management and operators. Due to this frequent turnover, the utility staff and operators typically are not aware

of the technical, managerial, and financial resources available to them. The goal of the welcome packet is to provide a summary of the services available from the various state agencies and regional health corporations and their contact information, see Appendix B. Each welcome packet will be specific to the community that is receiving it.

This project was originally tasked to the Capacity Development Coordinator; however, with staff turnover, the Technical Assistance Manager assigned OpCert to complete the project. Once the Capacity Development Program is fully staffed, the responsibility for the welcome packet will be transferred to them.

Rural Sanitation Calendar

Annually, the CapDev Program creates and distributes a rural utility calendar that includes reminders for deadlines associated with utility management and water monitoring requirements. This calendar also includes contact information for all the state programs that assist utilities in the management of their water systems. In SFY22 The Capacity Development and Operator Certification Program mailed out over 500 calendar to rural communities.

Implementation Schedule Update

Program implementation will proceed as follows over the next year:

- Maintain the current level of exam availability by offering exams on-demand in rural communities, during the biannual exam cycles, in conjunction with courses, and in an online format.
- Continue efforts to develop the training and exam materials required for the System Specific Training and Certification Program and move forward with program implementation.
- Continue with implementation of the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy through a quarterly analysis of compliance data and targeted communication to systems, taking advantage of OpCert's approach to offering exams on-demand in rural communities.
- The Capacity Development and Operator Certification Program will be split into two distinct programs, the Operator Certification Program and the Capacity Development Program.

Certification Challenges in Rural Alaska

Rural Alaskan water operators face many challenges and obstacles in obtaining certification not often seen in the contiguous United States. Due to Alaska's vast distances and severe weather changes, operators frequently experience difficulty in traveling to "hub communities" to obtain relevant training to prepare for certification exams. Additionally, many rural communities may

not have the funding to send their operators to trainings. In those cases, online training may be an option; however, many rural communities lack adequate internet access; therefore, many rural operators are unable to attend and/or complete online trainings.

Language and education barriers are also significant challenges to rural operators passing certification exams and obtaining certification. Some rural operators speak primarily Alaskan Native languages and have English as a second language. Many rural operators also have relatively limited formal schooling, with some not having completed high school or equivalent.

Frequent operator turnover is also a significant challenge for rural Alaskan water systems. Some factors that lead to higher turnover in rural communities include low wages, difficult working conditions, and the need for some operators to spend considerable time in subsistence activities, such as hunting and fishing. Due to these factors and others, many rural communities struggle to employ properly trained and certified operators on a long-term basis.

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Appendix A: Changes in Compliance

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Water Treatment and Water Distribution Systems

System	Class	July 2021	July 2022	Comments
CRNA Tazlina Health Clinic	WT 2	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Cruz Construction #1, Mobile	WT 1	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
FAA Bethel Well	WT 1	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Goodnews Bay	WT 1	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Seldovia	WT 2	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Three Bears Store #80	WT 1	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Valley Water Company	WD 2	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Pioneer Oooguruk Offshore Facility	WT 1	No System	In Compliance	Population increased to become NTNCWS again
Noorvik	WT 2	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Unalakleet	WT 2	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Pilot Station	WT 1	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
False Pass	WT 2	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Egegik	WT 1	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator certificate expired
ASD Bear Valley Elementary	WT 1	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	System reclassified from ST to WT 1
Nabors McKinley Camp	WT 1	No System	Out of Compliance	Population increased to become NTNCWS again

Small Untreated and Treated Water Systems

System	Class	July 2021	July 2022	Comments
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
BBBSD Naknek	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Birchtree Charter School	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Clark's Point	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Copper Center	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
DOT & PF - Fox Spring	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
El Capitan Lodge	ST	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Kenny Lake Community Well	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Kenny Lake Fire Hall	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Little Diomedes	ST	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Matthews Subdivision	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Mertarvik Water System	ST	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Midnight Sun Family Learning Center	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Nightmute New Watering Point	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Snowshoe Acres LLC	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Southeast Alaska Logging Camp	ST	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Three Bears Corporate Office	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Timber Ridge Condominiums	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Twin Hills	SU	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
YKSD - Allakaket School	ST	Out of Compliance	In Compliance	
Arkose Woods	SU	No System	In Compliance	New System
DOT & PF Seward Meridian Office Building	SU	No System	In Compliance	New System
MSBSD Beryozova School - New	SU	No System	In Compliance	New System
View Pointe at the Ranch - Phase 1 & 2	SU	No System	In Compliance	New System
Palmer Correctional Center	ST	No System	In Compliance	System reactivated

System	Class	July 2021	July 2022	Comments
Adak	ST	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Birchview Trailer Court	SU	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator certificate expired
Grayling	ST	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Heritage Park	SU	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Interact Ministries	SU	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Peters Creek Terrace	SU	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator certificate expired
Pit Bar and Liquor Store	ST	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Pitka's Point	ST	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Russian Mission	SU	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Snowshoe	SU	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Sterling Moose River Manor	SU	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Sunshine Community Health Clinic	ST	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Swiss Castle Estates	SU	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator certificate expired
Trail Lake Lodge & Motel	ST	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator turnover
Wildwood Mobile Home Park	SU	In Compliance	Out of Compliance	Operator certificate expired

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Appendix B: Welcome Packet Example

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Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

Congratulations on your new position for the City of XXXXX!

As a community leader, you are at the forefront of the effort to protect your community's public health. Managing and operating community water, wastewater, and solid waste utilities is challenging. Utilities must meet the many regulatory requirements that ensure public safety while providing consistent and affordable service to their communities. Thankfully, there are technical assistance providers that are available to assist utility managers and operators!

This guide is intended to provide an overview of the programs and technical assistance providers you can contact for assistance, as well as the responsibilities of your new position. Included is a contact list of your current technical assistance providers, descriptions of how their programs can help you, and important documents from each program. As you read the information about each program you are strongly encouraged to reach out to the contact person listed at the bottom of each page. To begin, read the information sheet about the Department of Environmental Conservation's Drinking Water Program. **Communicating with your DW Program Specialist is critical to providing safe drinking water to your community.** Please read the information about the DW Program and contact your assigned program specialist to ensure that your drinking water system is currently up to date with sampling in compliance.

The most important message of this guide is: reach out for assistance. Technical assistance staff wants to help you be successful!

For questions about this guide please contact:

- Dan DeSloover, Capacity Development and Operator Certification Program
- Phone: 907-465-5145
- Email: dan.desloover@alaska.gov

Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

Contact Information for Technical Assistance Providers

The contacts listed below are assigned to your community and are resources for any questions you may have about your sanitation utilities, from water sampling to financial reporting.

Please see the other side of this page for brief descriptions of how each of these programs can assist you and your community. Contact your technical assistance providers to check in and let them know about your new role with your community's utilities.

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation <i>dec.alaska.gov</i>	
Drinking Water Program EPS Name	907-XXX-XXXX Email
Remote Maintenance Worker Program RMW Name	Phone: 907-XXX-XXXX Cell: 907-XXX-XXXX Email
Operator Certification Program EPS Name	907-XXX-XXXX Email
Wastewater Compliance Program EPS Name	907-XXX-XXXX Email
Solid Waste Program EPS Name	907-XXX-XXXX Email
Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, & Economic Development <i>www.commerce.alaska.gov</i>	
Rural Utilities Business Advisor Program LGS Name	907-XXX-XXXX Email

Occasionally there are changes to the technical assistance providers assigned to your community. You can always find the most updated list of providers on DEC's website here:

<https://dec.alaska.gov/Applications/Water/OpCert/community-water-sewer-improvement-contact-list.xlsx>

Or you can scan this QR code to go to the updated contact list:



Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

Brief Descriptions of Technical Assistance Programs

Drinking Water Program http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/dw.aspx		1-866-959-7656
How they can help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide monitoring, compliance, and enforcement information on public drinking water systems. • Respond to complaints of contamination in public drinking water sources. Also respond to waterborne disease outbreaks. • Approve new public water systems and modifications to existing systems. <p><i>Note: Always contact your Drinking Water contact person BEFORE making any modifications to your water system.</i></p>		
Remote Maintenance Worker (RMW) Program http://dec.alaska.gov/water/remote-maintenance/		
How they can help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide on-site and remote training and technical assistance to local water and wastewater operators in rural communities. • Provide immediate response to emergency situations that threaten or impact community water and wastewater facilities. • Provide regional classroom training for utility operators in the region. • Maintain an inventory of emergency repair equipment available to loan to communities. 		
Operator Certification Program http://dec.alaska.gov/water/operator-certification		907-465-1139
How they can help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about water and wastewater system classifications, operator certification requirements, certificate renewals, and continuing education. • Notify operators about opportunities for training and certification exams and assist with resources to improve test scores. • Connect communities to additional resources and appropriate contacts. 		
Wastewater Compliance Program http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wastewater/		
How they can help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer questions about a community's wastewater discharge permits and authorizations. • Provide guidance on the required sampling and reporting for wastewater discharge. • Provide technical and compliance assistance to operators when there has been a violation of a wastewater discharge permit or authorization. 		
Solid Waste Program https://dec.alaska.gov/eh/solid-waste		907-269-7802
How they can help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with planning and permitting for current and future solid waste facilities. • Provide training and technical assistance for solid waste operators. • Produce tracking tools and guidance documents to help communities manage their solid waste. 		
Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/RuralUtilityBusinessAdvisorProgramRUBA.aspx		
How they can help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide managerial and financial training and communities with utility business planning. • Provide on-site training and assistance on utility management and finances. • Provide regional-based utility management courses. • Develop new management tools to assist water and wastewater utilities. 		

Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

ADEC Drinking Water (DW) Program

What is the DW Program?

The Drinking Water Program is a part of the Department of Environmental Conservation's Environmental Health Division. The program responsible for ensuring that public water utilities supply safe drinking water that meets federal health standards. DW Program staff also provides guidance to water utility owners and operators on the design, installation, operation, and maintenance of drinking water facilities.

How does the DW Program assist your community?

- By requiring that public water utility owners and operators regularly sample drinking water for regulated contaminants.
 - By reviewing sample test results and specifying corrective measures when contamination has occurred.
 - By reviewing and approving the design of new public water systems and modifications to existing systems.
 - By responding to complaints of contamination and to waterborne disease outbreaks.
 - By implementing strategies to assist utilities in providing cost-effective safe drinking water.
-

What are your next steps for learning about the DW Program?

The DW Program produces a yearly **monitoring summary** that describes all of the sampling, inspection, and reporting requirements for your system. It is very important that utility managers and operators are familiar with the monitoring summary and the timeframes for sampling. **Proper sampling is required by federal and state law and ensures that your drinking water is safe for your community to use.** Please review the attached copy of your system's current monitoring summary and make sure all utility staff understand what is required. If you have any questions at all about the monitoring summary, please contact your DW Program specialist.

When should you contact the DW Program?

- When your utility has a new administrator or operator, they should contact the DW Program to introduce themselves and receive guidance on sampling and compliance.
 - Your operators should follow your utility's **monitoring summary** to regularly sample and send the results to the DW Program.
 - **Before making any modifications to your drinking water system, no matter how minor.**
 - If there has been a failure or suspected contamination of your drinking water system.
-

How to contact the DW Program:

The DW Specialist assigned to your community is XXXXX.

- Phone: 907-XXX
 - Email: XXXXX
-

Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

Remote Maintenance Worker (RMW) Program

What is the RMW Program?

The RMW Program is a partnership between the Department of Environmental Conservation and five regional health corporations to provide onsite training and technical assistance to operators in rural communities. Your assigned Remote Maintenance Worker will provide assistance to your water and sewer operators, with the aim of building up their skills and preventing failures of utility systems.

How can the RMW Program assist your community?

- By providing on-site and remote training and assistance to your water and sewer operators.
 - By providing immediate response to emergency situations that threaten community water and sewer facilities.
 - By assisting your operators in creating and following a Preventive Maintenance (PM) Plan, which is an important tool for tracking system maintenance.
 - By providing regional classroom training for area utility operators.
 - By maintaining an inventory of emergency repair equipment for loan to communities.
-

What are your next steps for learning about the RMW Program?

If your utility doesn't have one already, your assigned RMW will help you create a **Preventive Maintenance (PM) Plan**. A PM Plan is a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual operational checklist that will help your operators keep track of the maintenance requirements for your systems. Please see the attached example PM Plan and contact your RMW to discuss creating a PM Plan for your utility. Once you've created your own PM Plan you can add a copy to this packet for easy reference.

When should you contact the RMW Program?

- Any time there is a new operator or utility manager.
 - Any time utility operators need advice, assistance, or training with the utility systems.
 - In the event of a system emergency, system management or operators should contact the RMW immediately to determine if the RMW can provide assistance.
 - At least quarterly, the operators should provide PM Plan updates to the RMW.
-

How to contact your RMW:

Your community is served by the XXXX.

Your RMW is XXXXX.

- Phone: 907-XXX
- Cell: 907-XXX
- Email: XXXXX

Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

Operator Certification (OpCert) Program

What is the OpCert Program?

The Operator Certification is a part of the Department of Environmental Conservation's Water Division. The program is responsible for ensuring that water and wastewater operators are properly trained and certified. The OpCert Program classifies water and wastewater systems, administers certification exams to operators, and coordinates trainings.

How can the OpCert Program assist your community?

- By providing information about the classification levels of your water and wastewater systems.
 - By providing information about trainings and training materials for your utility operators.
 - By arranging certification exams for operators in your community.
 - By assisting your operators in remaining current in their certifications by earning Continuing Education Units (CEUs) every three years.
-

What are your next steps for learning about the OpCert Program?

Your water and wastewater systems are required to have operators who are certified at the correct level. Please review the attached **system classification form** for more information about how your systems are classified and the current certification level of your operators. If your operators are not certified to the correct level, contact the OpCert Program to discuss the next steps they can take towards proper certification. Regardless of their level of certification, you should also contact the OpCert Program to ensure that your operators take the necessary continuing training to keep their certifications active.

When should you contact the OpCert Program?

- When there is a new operator or utility manager.
 - When an operator needs to take training.
 - When an operator needs to take a certification exam or needs exam study materials.
 - When an operator who holds certification needs continuing education to keep their certification current.
 - When changes have been made to your treatment systems.
-

How to contact the OpCert Program:

The OpCert Specialist assigned to your community is XXXXX.

- Phone: 907-XXX
- Email: XXXXX

Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program

What is the RUBA Program?

The Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program is part of the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development. RUBA's goal is to support rural communities in their efforts to build and maintain managerial and financial capacity necessary to safely operate and maintain their water and wastewater utilities. The program offers capacity building assistance to the governing bodies and staff of rural utilities throughout the state. The RUBA Program is staffed by Local Government Specialists (LGS), and each community is assigned to an LGS.

How can the RUBA Program assist your community?

- By providing onsite and remote managerial and financial training and technical assistance to utility managers and staff, including training with bookkeeping and budgeting.
 - By providing a series of eight management trainings to utility managers and staff, including trainings for clerks, elected officials, and bookkeepers.
 - By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of your current utility management plan and offering guidance on making improvements.
 - By providing expert QuickBooks onsite assistance, training, and access to a help line.
 - By partnering with the Department of Environmental Conservation on the Operations and Maintenance Best Practices to assess the capacity of rural water and wastewater utilities.
-

What are your next steps for learning about RUBA?

RUBA can assist you with your financial and organizational reporting. Please review the attached **sample financial report and sample meeting minutes** to see the type of documentation that is important to keep for your utility. Your LGS will identify areas that need improvement and help you develop strategies to improve your managerial and financial capacity. Please contact them to make sure your community is up to date with your documentation and has sustainable management and financial plans.

When should you contact the RUBA Program?

- Any time there is a new utility manger, clerk, board member, or bookkeeper.
 - When your utility needs assistance with financial or managerial issues, including bookkeeping, budgeting, utility board policies, personnel management, or elections.
 - To improve your Best Practices score, utility managers should send monthly financial reports to RUBA staff.
-

How to contact RUBA:

Your Local Government Specialist is XXXXX.

- Phone: 907-XXX
 - Email: XXXXX
-

Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

ADEC Wastewater Permitting and Compliance Programs

What are the Wastewater Permitting and Compliance Programs?

The Wastewater Permitting and Compliance Programs are part of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's Water Division. They issue and enforce the regulation of discharge of treated wastewater from permitted wastewater facilities to ensure that public health and the environment are protected.

How can the Wastewater Permitting and Compliance Programs assist your community?

- By answering questions about a community's wastewater discharge permits and authorizations.
 - By providing guidance on the required sampling and reporting for wastewater discharge.
 - By providing technical and compliance assistance to operators when there has been a violation of a wastewater discharge permit or authorization.
-

What are your next steps for learning about the Wastewater Permitting and Compliance Programs?

Please review the attached **wastewater discharge authorization** for your community. Your authorization includes sampling and reporting requirements to ensure that the conditions of your permit are met. Contact the Division of Water if you have any questions about the requirements for your wastewater facility.

When should you contact the Wastewater Permitting and Compliance Programs?

- New utility managers and operators should contact the Wastewater Permitting and Compliance Programs to introduce themselves and receive guidance on sampling and reporting requirements.
 - Your utility operators should follow the requirements of your **wastewater discharge authorization** to submit regular reports and sample results.
 - In the event of an unauthorized discharge or a failure of the wastewater treatment process that leads to the discharged wastewater being outside of permit requirements. Permit violations of any kind have to be reported as described in the permit. Assistance is available here:
<https://dec.alaska.gov/water/compliance/permittee/>
-

How to contact the Wastewater Permitting and Compliance Programs:

For any questions about your wastewater discharge permit and authorization, contact Earl Crapps in Wastewater Permitting:

Phone: 907-269-7681

Email: earl.crapps@alaska.gov

Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

ADEC Solid Waste Program

What is the Solid Waste Program?

The Solid Waste Program is part of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's Environmental Health Division. They regulate health and compliance at solid waste (landfill) facilities through a combination of design review, permits, inspections, monitoring, and compliance assistance.

How can the Solid Waste Program assist your community?

- By providing guidance on permit applications, landfill planning, operation, & management, assisting with grant applications for solid waste projects, helping draft ordinances and solid waste fee structures, and developing public outreach materials.
 - By developing and providing tools and guidance for solid waste operators and managers.
 - By assisting communities with planning for future solid waste needs.
-

What are your next steps for learning about the Solid Waste Program?

Please review the attached **landfill permit** for your community. Your permit includes important conditions about separating, securing, and burning different types of solid waste. Make sure that the utility managers and operators understand all of the terms of the permit. Contact your assigned Solid Waste Program specialist if you have any questions about the requirements for your solid waste facility.

When should you contact the Solid Waste Program?

- New solid waste utility managers and operators should contact the Solid Waste Program to introduce themselves and receive guidance on permit requirements and landfill best practices.
 - Your utility operators should follow the requirements of your **landfill permit** and can use the attached **monthly visual monitoring template** to regularly assess the operation of your landfill.
 - If your solid waste operators need training, contact your Solid Waste program specialist to learn about opportunities near you.
 - If your landfill is approaching capacity or if you are expecting a construction or renovation project to produce a large amount of waste, contact the Solid Waste Program to discuss your options.
-

How to contact the Solid Waste Program:

The Solid Waste specialist assigned to your community is XXXXXXXX.

Phone: 907-XXX-XXXX

Email:

Quick Reference Guide for Rural Community Sanitation Utilities

Operations & Maintenance Best Practices

What is Best Practices?

Operations & Maintenance Best Practices is a set of criteria used to assess the capacity of rural water and wastewater utilities. Communities are evaluated against each criteria and assigned a numerical score. **Best Practices scores are used to determine a utility's eligibility and priority for receiving certain state and federal funds for water and sewer projects.** The scoring criteria were developed by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's Village Safe Water (VSW) and Remote Maintenance Worker (RMW) Programs, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development, Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program, and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC).

What are the Best Practices scoring criteria?

Best Practices scores are meant to evaluate a utility's capacity to provide sustainable service. Best Practices scoring is based on three overall categories: Technical, Managerial, and Financial. Included in these categories are a total of nine criteria. Please see the attached Best Practices scoring criteria document for more details about the criteria. The criteria are scored by staff in several state programs:

- Capacity Development and Operator Certification (CDOC) Program staff are responsible for scoring the Operator Certification criteria.
 - Remote Maintenance Worker (RMW) Program staff are responsible for scoring the Preventative Maintenance Plan (PMP) criteria.
 - Drinking Water (DW) Program staff are responsible for scoring the Compliance criteria.
 - Rural Utility Business Advisor (RUBA) Program staff are responsible for scoring the Utility Management Training, Meetings of the Governing Body, Budget, Revenue, Worker's Compensation, and Payroll/Tax Liability Compliance criteria.
-

How does Best Practices Scoring affect eligibility for funding?

Best Practices scores are published twice per year, in the spring and fall. Best Practice score accounts for 40% of the points possible for Capital Improvement Project (CIP) scoring. This is an important source for rural utilities to fund water and sewer projects. **The most effective way to increase your community's chance of receiving this project funding is by improving your Best Practices score. The most effective way to increase your Best Practices score is by working with your assigned staff in the programs you will read about in this quick reference guide.**

How can you get more information about Best Practices Scoring?

Your utility's current Best Practices score is attached to this document. Please review your Best Practices score and contact your assigned program staff for guidance about how to maintain and improve it.

When you improve your Best Practices score, you are also improving capacity of your utility to provide service to your community!